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WAITING FOR BURGLARS

BLACKFACE MONOLOGUE

By
BIRCH B. RIDGWAY

CHICAGO
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Hageman's Make-Up Book

By MAURICE HAGEMAN

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

WAITING FOR BURGLARS

BLACKFACE MONOLOGUE FOR A MAN

By

BIRCH B. RIDGWAY

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WAITING FOR BURGLARS

Scene—Bank interior with imitation cardboard safe. At rise of curtain SAMBO is discovered on guard equipped with a razor and an army gun. Stands near safe.

SAMBO. Dis heah job ob bein' night watch at dis savings bank sure am a soft snap. Just like bein' President ob de United States. There hain't nothin' to do but sot round an' watchful wait for burglars. But there hain't no safe an' sane robber goin' to monkey round dis establishment with Sambo Shinbones on de job. No, suh! [*Shows gun to audience.*] Dis heah gun I got in my hands is de finest scattah gauge weapon in de world. An' talk about bein' a good shot—why, folks, I kin shoot dat gun with de same sureness dat I shoots craps. Den if de dose ob lead don't stop them, they sure had bettah make tracks while they am in condition. [*Draws razor from shoe.*] Dis razor am to use in a pinch—one ob de open kind. Dis heah nigger don't take no stock in safety razors. Yes, suh! All de robbers am completely bluffed out. There hain't a rough neck in de whole state dat would have de uncommon sense to lay a hand on dat safe. If he did, de undertakah certainly would have a patient.

But maybe you white folks would help me if I got in a scrape with bank burglars. [*Looks over audience.*] Some ob youse looks like you'd be purty tough customers in a free-for-all. It sure does me good to know dat such a stiff lookin' bunch am 'backin' me.

Speakin' ob bank robbers, I sure had a most awful encountah with 'em while I was office boy in a St. Louis

bank. De robbers got de drop on me dat time 'cause I nebber had no gun. If I'd only had dis blundah-buss there wouldn't have been no robbery. But, say! You all realize dat what I am speakin' is perfectly reliable. It am de truth, de whole truth, and anything but de truth. Well—I was sayin'—I was there in de bank dat night a sweepin' out for de next mornin' an' dem burglars got in an' begin tyin' my hands before I eben had time to draw my pocket knife. I tried to git loose, but one ob 'em says: "Hold still, you black coon, dere ain't no Abe Lincoln to turn you loose this time."

I didn't like to be called names like dat, but what could a fellah do? All I can say is dat dey war mighty mean men. One ob dem sot down on my head an' de other on my solar plexus an' grinned down in my face. "What you all want?" I asked. "Don't you know?" inquired de big fellah what was settin' on top ob my lungs. "We've come to hold up this bank?" "Well," says I, "you may be holdin' de bank up, but you am certainly holdin' me down."

After they got tired ob usin' me for a kind of parlor settee they got up an' started to blow de safe with nitro-gasoline. When dey wasn't lookin' I sort ob kicked my feet on de floor to attract de attention ob a cop what ought to be wanderin' round out in de street. "Quit that kickin'," yelled de big burglar. Dat made me mad, it did, and I replied: "You'd kick yourself if you was all tied up like dis."

From den on I didn't do nuffin' but sot back an' watch de following numbers on de program. Ebbery time I'd bat my eyes dat big fellah would pint his fire-arm at me an' I couldn't do a thing to save de shack from gettin' a first-class clean-up. Dem men was surtainly old hands at de business. I'll bet you all a chaw ob terbaccer, women an' ladies not included, dat de big one with de gun has busted more banks to the square mile than all the Democratic administrations in de last sebbenty years. I nebber saw anyone enjoy a thing like dem men did. Dey wasn't in no hurry at all an' laughed

an' cracked jokes while dey was preparin' to crack de safe.

"Mike," says de big one to de little one, "does you like to hear riddles?" "Oh, sure," says de little one. "I'm a bear on riddles." "Well, here it is. Why is bank crackin' like buyin' government bonds?" "I'll give it up," says the little one; "why is it?" "Because dey are strictly safe business," he replied.

Then the little one went to de window an' looked for de cop. "We don't want to split de swag with no bow-legged billy swinger," he growled. I suppose he was sore about de gag his pardner worked on him, for he says: "Talkin' about cops makes me think of a riddle what I'd like to spring on you." "All right, spring ahead," responded de big fellah. "Why is the lead man in the movies like a policeman?" den asked the little man. De big man scratched his head and says: "I reckon it's because they always catch the villain." "No," cackled the other, "it's because dey is both star men."

Well, dem burglars kept on a talkin' dat way about de weather an' war an' religion until they got a hole drilled through de side ob de ole soap box. Den they got de carbohic acid or nitro-dynamite or what ebber it war an' elevated dat sixty-ton safe plumb through de skylight. I don't expect dem burglars ebber found none ob dat coin. No, suh! I'll bet dat strong box nebber stopped sailin' till she hit de Mississippi ocean.

So dat's all about me and de bank crackers. If I'd only had dis gun an' razor to entertain de visitors with, I might have got my name in red capital letters in de Sunday papers. Yes, suh! I certainly does believe in preparedness. In dat case, preparedliness would have been next to godliness.

But, say—afore I forgets it—a friend ob mine is in de most critical condition. I 'spect he's bound to die an' if he don't, I don't nebber 'spect he'll recover. De fact is, he just can't sleep an' if a man can't sleep any at all, he's in for it. Dat poor man, he actually snores

so loud dat he wakes himself up. So sad, so sad! [*Sniffs.*] It almost brings tears to my ears ebbery time I thinks about it. An' my friend was such a fine man an' one ob de best poultry raisers in de south part of Plymouth Rock County. Why, once I saw him raise twenty hens an' four roosters off a roost one night an' not a one ob 'em squawked. If dar is any person in de audience who can beat dat record he oughtn't to be heah tonight. No, suh! he should be out at work. But I just can't keep dat poor man's sorry condition out ob my mind. He sure am to be pitied. I guess I might as well tell youse about another calamity while you all am feelin' sad an' down-hearted.

I was walkin' along de street de other day an' I met a little colored boy who was cryin' as if his heart would break an' fall to pieces. Ob course I stopped to find out what was de matter. "Little boy," I asked, "why does you weep so bitterly?" "Well," he says, "it's just like dis: My paw he's all laid up in bed an' I've got to tote ebbery bit of de wood an' water." "Well," says I, "that is a great misfortune. What is the matter with your father—has he got a case of rheumatism?" "Hain't no case ob rheumatiz about it," he bawled, "it's a charge of bird shot."

Den I strolled on down de highway until I met a young niggah what looked like he'd been run obber by a passenger train. My curiosity was 'roused to de highest pitch an' I inquired ob him what de main difficulty was. "Well, suh," he explained, "I accidentally happened to be walkin' round over in Mistah Bayne's melon patch an' afore I knew it I was attacked and mistreated somethin' awful." "That's too bad," I says in my gentle way; "did ole Bayne catch you while you was there?" "No," he replied, "but his bulldog did."

Maybe I don't look like it, but I come from mighty noted families. Yes, suh, my father was a minstrel end man in one of Shakespeare's plays, an' my mother was Topsy in "Uncle Tom's Calaboose." I 'spects dat accounts for my hankerin' for de footlights, but I don't

guess I'll ebber have any success on de stage. You see, dis is de way ob it: A manager ob a big show offered me a position as stage hand, but I nebber took de job. No, suh; I couldn't be two things all at once. "How in de name ob sense," I says, "can you expect me to be a stage hand when I was born an' raised with two black hands?" [*Holds dusky hands to audience.*]

But I'm gettin' entirely off ob de subject. When I first commenced I was talkin' about bank robbers. But—as I said once before—dar hain't one in de whole district dat would dare show his face round heah. None ob 'em wants to risk gettin' punctuated with buckshot.

[*Loud knock outside; SAMBO badly frightened.*]

Hello! Who's out dar? Who's dar, I tells you? [*Crash of glass outside.*] Lordy, they am breakin' in. Say—you white folks—if you all see anyone round heah in a minute, tell dem dat de night watch am gone on his vacation. [*Runs off.*]

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CHARACTERS

Asa Tompkins—A prosperous farmer who cannot tolerate deceit.

Dixey—The hired man, and one of nature's noblemen.

John Remington—A manly young man in love with Louise.

Jerry—A half-grown, awkward country lad.

Mrs. Tompkins—A woman with a secret that embitters her.

Julia—A spoiled child, the only daughter born to Mr. and Mrs. Tompkins.

Louise—The daughter whom Mr. Tompkins believes to be his own.

Ruth—Mr. Tompkin's niece, and a great romp.

Plays about two hours.

SYNOPSIS

Act 1. Sewing carpet rags. "John and I are engaged." "Well, you can disengage yourself, for you'll never be married." "Mrs. Clark, she's took worse." Who makes the cake? Julia declines to sew carpet rags. "It would ruin my hands for the piano or my painting." Dixey to the rescue. "You take the rags a minute, child, and I'll just give that fire a boost." Dixey's story. "It breaks his heart, but he gives her away, an' he promises never teh let her know as how he's her father." Enter Jerry. "Howdy." John gets a situation in the city. Farewell. "It's a dandy scheme, all the same. We'll have our party in spite of Aunt Sarah." "Oh, I'm so happy." The quartette. Curtain.

Act 2. Chopping mince meat. The letter. Louise faints. "How dare you read a paper that does not concern you?" "You have robbed me of my father's love." The mother's story. Dinner. "I swan, I guess I set this table with a pitchfork." "Now, Lambkin, tell Dixey all 'bout it, can't yer?" "It looks zif they'd got teh be a change here purty darned quick, an' zif I'm the feller 'lected teh bring it 'bout." "None o' my bizness, I know, but—I am her father!" "It's love the leetle one wants, not money." "If I'd been a man, I'd never given my leetle gal away." "I'm dead sot on them two prop'sitions." Curtain.

Act 3. Dixey builds the fire. "Things hain't so dangerous when everybodys' got his stummick full." The telegram. "It means that Louise is my promised wife." "By what right do you insinuate that there has been treachery under this roof?" "A miserable, dirty, little waif, picked up on the streets, and palmed off upon my father as his child!" "Oh, my wife, your attitude tells a story that breaks my heart." "Yeh druve her to do what she did, an' yeh haint got no right teh blame her now." "Friend Tompkins, a third man has taken our leetle gal an' we've both got teh larn teh git along without her. We kin all be happy in spite o' them two sentimental kids." Curtain.

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